National Government
or
People's Government?

by

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PREFACE

Passion cannot be altogether kept out of politics. Men are more easily moved by an appeal to emotion. But political practice, in order to be effective in promoting social progress, ought to be guided by reason—not the so-called pure reason, but logical deduction from a scientific analysis of the forces involved. Otherwise, political movements, however powerful they may appear, cannot lead anywhere, or mislead, whatever may be their profession.

Nationalism is a sentiment, primarily. Its appeal is mainly to emotion. Political theory or a scientific examination of political relations has not found any place in the Indian nationalist movement. Therefore, it has been moving in a vicious circle; and, if it succeeds, the Indian people will be in the danger of being misled and betrayed.

A critical examination of some preconceived ideas is urgently needed for the rationalisation of Indian politics which, in its turn, is the precondition for fruitful political practice. Old political ideals have lost their liberating significance. Now they are cherished either as a matter of unthinking habit or with a contrary purpose. They should be discarded. But that cannot be done so long as

political attitude and political behaviour will be determined by passion, altogether untempered by reason.

This small book is an appeal to reason. The appeal is made primarily to those numerous intellectuals who are organisationally unattached, but are emotionally swayed by the slogans and shibboleths of nationalist politics. An appeal to reason is also a challenge to intellectual integrity.

M. N. ROY

DEHRA DUN,
December 20th, 1943.

CHAPTER I

FALSE EXPECTATIONS

WITH the majority of the politically minded people in the country, National Government has come to be an article of faith. There is no general agreement about its composition, and the all important question of programme and policy is not even raised. The demand is for a replacement of Englishmen by Indians. It is assumed that everything will be alright, once that change takes place, provided that the National Government will be possessed of real power.

The problem of freedom may be simplified in this manner by the average nationalist who, for historical reasons, is full of racial animosity, and is swayed by apparently laudable sentiments rather than by reason, or any carefully thought-out idea of social progress. But experience has shown that this sort of nationalism, however laudable or justifiable, cannot take the country very far even towards the kind of freedom which would satisfy the average nationalist. The demand for National Government does not seem to have any real sanction behind it. Consequently, it serves no other purpose than that of ineffective agitation.

Nevertheless, it is quite possible that after the war, or even earlier, India, will have a National Government. Therefore, one should no longer take up the complacent attitude that, as soon as that change takes place, everything will be alright. Many who believe themselves to be leftists are also ardent supporters of the demand for a National Government. It is particularly necessary for them to do some hard thinking in this connection. They are running the risk of being misled by false expectations. The more intelligent among them entertain no illusion about the intents and purposes of the people who will determine the policy of the National Government and control all its actions. They would concede that the National Government, formed by the older political parties or even by the Congress alone, would not establish the kind of freedom needed by the masses of the people. Nevertheless, they maintain that any sort of National Government, transfer of effective power from the foreigners to Indians, irrespective of whoever those Indians may be, will mark an advance towards freedom.

This point of view evidently is determined by the doctrine that a National State is a historical necessity. They believe that a National State controlled by the capitalists or even by more reactionary classes will be an improvement on the

Imperialist State. In the abstract theoretical sense, that may be true. But a political doctrine cannot be equally valid in different periods of world history.

There is another expectation with which the leftists support the demand for a National Government. They believe that the National State will be weaker than the Imperialist State. They further believe that in order to retain the support of the people the National Government will have to introduce greater measures of formal freedom, if not of real popular welfare. In that situation, they conclude, it will be easier for the popular forces to assert themselves on the situation and influence the policy of the Government. The logical conclusion of this line of hypothetical reasoning is the expectation that the National Government will be compelled to establish a democratic regime notwithstanding all influences to the contrary direction. In other words, it is expected that the establishment of a National Government will create an atmosphere which will enable the popular forces to overwhelm the powerful minorities controlling the economic life of the country, and thus advance the country towards the establishment of democratic freedom.

These expectations are backed up by a large measure of romanticism. Those who expect such

a favourable change in the relation of political forces evidently believe that the National Government will be compelled to act as they desire under the threat of being overthrown by a popular uprising. This is a romantic view, because it does not take into account the counter-moves which will be surely made by the upper classes, who will have the advantage of having the National Government under their control from the very beginning, in addition to their strategic position in the economic life of the country. It is sheer romanticism or wishful thinking to expect that the National Government will be no more stable than the Kerensky regime during the Russian Revolution. The situation in India is not nearly as unsettled as that of Russia in the summer of 1917. Nor will the transfer of power take place in the same manner as in Russia. Therefore, the expectation is based on an entirely false analogy.

The argument of the leftists supporting the demand for National Government derives force from the doctrine that National State is a historical necessity. Those who stand by that argument may share the expectations of their romantic comrades. But, when pressed, they would argue that, even if that expectation was unfounded, the establishment of a National State by itself should be welcomed by all the progressive elements. This

argument would obviously be based on the assumption that the masses of the Indian people would fare better under national-capitalist economy than under colonial exploitation. This assumption, in its turn, is based on yet another assumption: that under all circumstances, in all periods of history, capitalism is bound to function as a relatively liberating, progressive, force. As a matter of fact, the demand for a National Government, as it is conceived by the average nationalist and older political parties, cannot be honestly and intelligently supported except by those who want to establish a capitalist regime and are prepared, to introduce the retrograde measures which are indispensable for the maintenance of capitalism anywhere in the world to-day. Leftist supporters of the demand for National Government would not be counted among them.

Therefore, it is necessary for the honest and intelligent leftists, who support the demand for National Government for others reasons than simple nationalist sentiment, to examine if their expectations are well founded. If romanticism is ruled out, then the support for National Government amounts to welcoming the establishment of a capitalist regime. That by itself should not be objectionable. But can capitalism operate as a progressive and liberating force in India even in

the present period of world history? That is the crucial question. The answer to that question should determine the attitude of all those who visualise national freedom as the freedom of the Indian people to prosper and progress.

The demand for a National Government, which under the given relation of forces in India will unavoidably be controlled by mercantile and industrialist interests, will have to be examined in the context of the problems of post-war reconstruction. So, to begin with, those problems must be clearly stated. In the second place, the problems of the post-war reconstruction of India cannot be isolated from the problems of the post-war reconstruction of the entire world. Both the sets of problems are interlinked and must be solved together. Evidently, the future of India cannot be fitted into the narrow perspective of isolated nationalism. It is not necessary to advocate quixotic internationalism. Nor is it necessary to maintain that outside the British Empire, even transformed as a Commonwealth of free nations, India will necessarily feel like a fish out of water. What has to be faced is the necessity of economic inter-dependence. In other words, economic nationalism must go. That, however, would not in any way prejudice political independence of India as a nation.

Those are the broad outlines of the picture of India's future. Will it be possible to fit a national-capitalist State in that picture? And will capitalism be able to operate as a progressive and liberating force in that context?

In order to carry on this discussion fruitfully, it is necessary to agree on one point, namely, the social character of the generally desired National Government. It is going to be a capitalist government, and as such it will naturally tackle the problems of India's post-war reconstruction from the point of view of the capitalist mode of production. Whoever dispute these basic implications of the demand for a National Government are either dishonest or indulge in wishful thinking, or ignore the obvious facts of the situation. The older political parties are all controlled by commercial and industrial interests. Even the more reactionary feudal elements wield a considerable influence in their higher councils. The Liberals and the non-party leaders are honest and outspoken champions of the Indian bourgeoisie. The other party to the desired transfer of power, namely the British Government, would not think of any other element than the commercial and industrial classes; therefore, it insists on an agreement among the older political parties as the condition for the transfer of power. These factors predeter-

mine the social composition of the National Government, and the social composition, in its turn, will necessarily determine its programme and policy. So, India under such a National Government should be visualised without any illusion. Wishful thinking will only mislead, and romanticism is dangerous.

Ordinarily, in an economically backward country like India, capitalism should function as a progressive force. Therefore, the establishment of a National Government controlled by the commercial and industrial classes would be a progressive step. But can the economic progress of India take place on the basis of the capitalist mode of production? If investigation leads to a negative answer to this question, then leftists should have no reason to support the demand for a National Government.

Economic progress of a country in our time is promoted by the introduction of the mechanical means of production. Industrialisation of the country, is, indeed, the common nationalist demand. But it is one thing to make a demand, and it is an entirely different thing to enforce it. It is believed that until now industrialisation of the country has been prevented by the foreign government. But in reality, other factors of native origin have been more decisive obstacles.

An ever-expanding internal market is the basic condition for an unrestricted growth of industries. It is more so in our time when in the foreign market a very keen competition of others already in the field will have to be faced. Therefore, the basic problem of India's economic progress is how to increase the purchasing power of the masses of her people. Unless it can be proved that capitalism will be able to solve that problem, its progressiveness cannot be simply assumed.

The first step towards the solution of that problem is a radical agrarian reform, which will mean encroachment on the vested interest of the landowning classes, and may have to go to the extent of transferring the ownership of land to the actual cultivator. That is nothing less than a social revolution. The capitalist class wins the right to lead society in a particular period of history, and becomes the vanguard of progress, by accomplishing that revolution. Will the National Government raise the banner of that revolution, still to take place in India? The record of the parties which would control the National Government does not inspire any confidence in that respect. Failing to perform that initial revolutionary act, capitalism forfeits the very possibility of functioning as a socially progressive factor. Because that failure prejudices its own development. Therefore, in

India the role of a national-capitalist State will be that of a cripple carrying others.

The basic obstacle of a very low and stagnant purchasing power of the masses will be still there, even after the accidental obstacle of a foreign government is removed. The corollary to the demand for industrialisation has been the demand for high protection for the nascent Indian industries. It is maintained that this latter demand has not been granted by the foreign government. That is not quite true. During the last two decades, a large measure of protection has been granted to a number of Indian industries. However, the National Government can be expected to remove all grievances on that score, and Indian industries will have the fullest benefit of protection. Will that help or hinder industrialisation ?

It is a matter of experience as well as a generally accepted theoretical view that protection raises the price level by eliminating competition. It ceases to have that effect only when the protected industries produce not for exchange, but for use. But nobody has suggested that under the National Government the purposes of production will be so changed. It will take place on the basis of capitalism, and the function of capitalism is to produce goods for exchange—to be sold at the highest possible profit. Therefore, behind the wall

of protection, raised by an obliging National Government, commodities manufactured in India will be sold at a higher price. On the other hand, the purchasing power of the great bulk of the people will remain stationary. Consequently, the internal market will contract. Industrial production will have to be slowed down—to be equated with reduced demand—reduced not because there is no want, but because the money at the disposal of the bulk of the consumers can buy less goods at higher price. Instead of promoting the growth of industries, protection will retard the growth. That will be the first consequence of the economic policy of the National Government. It will be a policy which will hinder the growth of capitalism itself! Let alone welfare of the masses.

The capitalists in control of political power will, of course, not admit defeat. They would try to capture foreign markets for compensating the loss at home. The interest of capitalism will compel the National Government to adopt the policy of subsidising export trade. The money for the purpose will have to be raised through taxation. The taxable capacity of the masses of the Indian people being limited, any additonal taxation would further reduce their purchasing power. Instead of raising the entire society on a higher economic level, as capitalism did in the past in other coun-

tries, it will further depress the already low standard of living of the masses, and thus undermine the foundation of the very possibility of economic progress.

These economic policies, which a National Government will have to adopt necessarily, will sooner or later create popular discontent. Given the traditional submissiveness of the Indian masses, and having a Mahatma and some other national idols at its command, the National Government may be able to fool the people for some time. But even with those advantages, it will not be able to fool all the people for all the time. It will have to take all necessary precautions in order to cope with seething popular discontent breaking out into a powerful demand for democratisation of the regime. The abstract conception of national welfare will be placed above any concrete measure of actual welfare of those constituting the nation. The National State will become a God, on whose altar the less fortunate individuals composing the nation will have to make sacrifices. There is no ground for the expectation that under a National Government there will be greater liberties for the popular forces to assert themselves on the situation.

It is not a question of goodness or badness. Nor is it a question of intention. The National Govern-

ment may have all the good will in the world. Those who are demanding it to-day may sincerely believe that it will solve all India's problems. But the National Government will act as above simply because it cannot act otherwise, so long as it will remain under the control of vested interests. If it can ever outgrow that control, then it will not be the National Government demanded by the older political parties, and it is that demand which is being supported to-day by the leftists.

Finally, there is the expectation of the popular discontent, aggravated by the capitalist policy of the National Government, breaking out into a powerful revolt to overthow it. This expectation has already been characterised as sheer romanticism. Why take all the trouble for setting up a government which you know will act in such a way as to require its overthrow? If the popular forces are powerful enough to overthrow the government after it has been in power, why should they not rather demand the power for themselves even now? If all the honest and intelligent leftists join hands, the establishment of a people's Government, instead of a capitalist National Government, is not beyond the realm of practical possibilities. In any case, no honest and intelligent leftist can support any other demand.

What are the possibilities of eventually over-

throwing the capitalist National Government, whose immediate establishment may be advocated as a lesser evil? Whether it will be a lesser evil, is a different question, which will be discussed in another chapter. The romanticists counting on that possibility believe that the National Government will not be nearly as strong as the present government. That is again a wrong calculation. In the first place, the present demand for a National Government having no sanction behind it, the National Government will be established as a result of voluntary transfer of power. That means, the National Government will inherit the entire coercive machinery of the Imperialist State. Even to-day it is at the disposal of Indian vested interest. The engineers of India's future constitution do not propose any radical overhaul of the present State machinery. The only thing demanded is that, on the top, Englishmen must be replaced by Indians, and the services Indianised; but the steel-frame of the services will remain. So, as a civil State power, the National Government will not be any weaker than the present Government. If the present Government has been able to cope with popular discontent, the National Government, with the immense advantage of having a Mahatma and a number of popular idols

as its propagandists, will be able to do so much more easily.

Militarily also the National State may become formidable within a shorter time than can be imagined. That will result from the impossibility of satisfying capitalist ambitions through the normal production of commodities and their exchange. Behind the wall of protection, industries will be built. Before long, India will experience the absurdity of over-production in the midst of general want. The capitalist would not leave the industrial plants to rust and write off their money as lost. There is another way of running the industrial plants and even expanding them. That is armament production. The National Government must have a National Army. Of course, any aggressive design will be disowned. It will be all for defence. The Muslim problem will not be solved. The bogey of Pakistan will still be there. So, it would be the bounden duty of the National Government not only to create a powerful army, but to militarise the whole nation for defending Akhand Hindustan against the Muslims who might invite the Islamic States to invade India. The present atmosphere of emotional nationalism will be very congenial for such propaganda. It may not be actully promoted by the National Government. But the powers behind

the throne will promote and finance it. Because, a programme of large-scale militarisation will help the Indian capitalists to overcome the crisis of the absurd over-production. With arms produced in the country as the only commodity which can be sold, because it will be sold in a market guaranteed by the Government, and with millions of people unemployed, it will be an easy proposition for the National Government to raise a big army.

The leftists who are labouring under the illusion of overthrowing the National Government by mobilising the discontented masses should think of the possibility of the coercive machinery of the State, inherited by the National Government, being reinforced within a short time by a powerful army. That will take place of economic necessity.

The National Government will not be a short episode like the Kerensky regime. It will become the bulwark of counter-revolution. Under its protection, capitalism will operate not as a progressive force, but as Fascism. And it is a matter of bitter experience how Fascism in power can crush even the most powerful revolutionary movement. So, let us have no false expectations, and let us free ourselves from illusions which can be entertained only by unthinking romanticists.

CHAPTER II

THE LESSER EVIL?

WE continue the examination of the arguments with which progressive elements, not attached to any political party, support the demand for a National Government. To avoid any possible misunderstanding, let it be stated once again that there is absolutely no disagreement about the demand for the freedom of the Indian people. The question under discussion is whether a National Government composed of representatives of the older political parties, and controlled by the power behind them, will establish freedom for the Indian people. It is admitted by those progressive elements, to whose reason this appeal is made, that the National Government as now generally demanded will be a capitalist regime. Capitalism may not by itself be an evil. But the question is whether capitalism can even now play a progressive role in the history of our country. They say that it is a choice between foreign Imperialism and national capitalism, and the latter should be chosen as the lesser evil.

Two questions arise from the above contention. Firstly, whether national capitalism in power will

really be a lesser evil; and secondly, if there is no other alternative. In this chapter, we shall discuss only the first question.

The most plausible argument in support of the demand for a National Government is that it will be better able to organise the defence of the country and generally to mobilise the energy and resources of the Indian people in this war against Fascism. When the defence of the country was a very acute problem, we examined this plausible argument and exposed its fallacy. If the Nationalist leaders were really anxious for the defence of the country against the imminent Japanese invasion, and wanted that the Indian people should make the maximum contribution to the war against Fascism, they could have done everything for the purpose, whether they were in office or not. The people would have responded to their appeal in any case. Denial of this contention would mean that the nationalist leaders did not command the confidence of the people to the extent they claimed to. Therefore, a Government formed by them would not be a representative government: it would not be a National Government. It would further mean that such a National Government would not be able to do more for the defence of the country or for enthus-

ing the people to participate in the world struggle against Fascism.

The situation, in which the above argument in support of the National Government appeared plausible, has passed. The establishment of a National Government is no longer a matter of emergency. It is expected to establish greater freedom than at present, and to promote popular welfare at least to some extent. But the was is not yet over. It may continue still for another year or more. So, a National Government established now will have to organise the war efforts of the Indian people. Will it do so any more democratically than the present regime? In making the hypothetical comparison, one thing must be borne in mind. The personnel of the present regime is overwhelmingly Indian. It is not true that the Indian officials are without any power, and that the few Englishmen at the top run the whole machinery of the Government as they please. Not only is the administrative machinery manned and run almost entirely by Indians, but Indian officials have a very large part in framing the policy of the Government, in so far as the present Government has any policy at all. That being the case, replacement of the Viceroy's Executive Council by a National Government will hardly make any change in the administration of

the war time measures. If at present these measures cause hardships to the people, they will do so equally under a National Government. The hardships result not so much from the measures themselves as from their administration. This may not be directly known to those who discuss political problems abstractly. But it is a matter of experience with those who actively participate in the daily public life of the country. The present hardships of the people, even the famine conditions prevailing in Bengal, are due rather to mal-administration and corruption than to callousness on the part of the Government.

Those who believe that a National Government would be at least a lesser evil, would be well advised to think over these practical problems of the situation. Some knowledge of the immediate cause of the present intolerable situation will convince them that a few Englishmen, after all, are not the devils of the drama, and consequently their replacement by Nationalist leaders, endowed with all the constitutional power, will not change the situation as far as the masses of the people are concerned.

It may be contended that the war time measures introduced by the present regime are themselves oppressive, and a National Government will change them. While advancing this contention,

one must remember that the National Government will have to shoulder the responsibility of mobilising Indian resources to help the prosecution of the war. Recruitment must continue; war supplies must be purchased; their production must be kept up; so on and so forth. Measures introduced by the present Government in all these respects have been criticised. But no alternatives have been proposed. If a National Government was installed to-day, and assuming that it would be serious about India's war efforts, the war-time measures in force at present could not be expected to change for the better. Apart from the evils of mal-administration and corruption, the essential defect of those measures is that they do not place the burden of financing the war on the shoulders of those who can not only bear it, but are actually making money out of the war; that only the common man has to undergo privations and hardships. It would be naive to expect that a National Government controlled by the Indian capitalists would free war-time measures from this defect. On the contrary, with a Government completely under their control, the Indian upper classes would free themselves from any burden placed on them by the present measures, and pass on the entire burden to the common people. Thus, immediately, the National Government would be rather the

greater evil, as far as the Indian people are concerned.

Take a concrete case. It is contended that a National Government alone can solve the food problem. Of course, nobody has explained how the miracle will be done. If there is a real scarcity of foodstuffs, a National Government will be as helpless as the present regime. The export of food for the armed forces cannot be stopped by the National Government, if it will not take up the position that India is not concerned with the war. There is no other export for the National Government to stop. All allegations about secret export have been disproved by facts. The National Government will be less able to import food than the present Government. Nevertheless, it is contended that a National Government will solve the food problem. What does that mean? It means that there is no scarcity; that there is enough food in the country. One may ask: Why don't the nationalist leaders appeal to those, who are hoarding food grains, to release them so that the people may not starve? Is there any reason why they should not do so until they are in office? From this remarkable default on their part, it may be inferred that they are engaged in a political hold-up; that they are blackmailing. But we prefer to take a more charitable view of

the situation. The nationalist leaders are simply not in a position to persuade their patrons and financiers to forego profits made from anti-social activities. There is no reason to believe that they will be able to do so any more when they will constitute the government of the country.

The present Government of the country, in so far as it is controlled by Englishmen, has no reason to be particularly considerate towards people who are creating a very inflammable situation in the country. A National Government will stand in an entirely different relation to those people. Not a few of those people are actually members of the older political parties who will form the National Government; all of them are professed nationalists and vociferous supporters of the demand for a National Government. The powerful patrons and financiers of the older parties are to be found among those people. A National Government will be their government. Consequently, it must pursue a policy which will promote their interest, enable them to make even more money than at present. Otherwise, why should they clamour for a National Government? It would be absurd to maintain that they also are oppressed and exploited like the masses of the Indian people. They enjoy as much freedom and privilege as the most highly placed Englishmen

in this country. And *de-facto* they constitute the power behind the throne of the present Government.

Only a bunch of imbeciles and idiots could have bungled the food situation as it has been done. Most of the Englishmen in high positions may be abused in a variety of ways, but they can hardly be called imbeciles and idiots. They have acted, as they have done, under pressure. And the pressure came from vested interests which may be partially British, but are very largely Indian. As a matter of fact to-day we have in India no longer an Imperialist State, but a National Capitalist State. Because the policy of the Government as regards the internal economic affairs is determined by Indian big business. Of course, British big business still remains in the country, and has its say. A National Government will be free from that control. National Capitalism will have a monopolist position. Therefore, Indian big business is the most powerful supporter of the demand for a National Government. It is only natural that, when the demand will be enforced, they will take their pound of flesh. Indians are also human beings. Indian capitalists cannot be expected to be above the profit motive, and the law of social relations will not cease to operate in

India as soon as National Government will be established.

Let us see farther ahead. What will happen after the war under a National-Capitalist regime? To desire an end of the present regime is a matter of sentiment, and therefore the choice of the lesser evil may be advocated. Only, those advocating the choice should seriously think whether it would be really a lesser evil. We are of the opinion, and arguments in support of that opinion have been given, that it would be a greater evil. But that opinion does not imply that the present regime is desirable. The contention is that a National-Capitalist Government will not improve the situation. What is necessary for the freedom of the Indian people is the replacement of the present regime by a really democratic government, and that a government controlled by the older political parties will not be a democratic government.

The discussion about the kind of government India should have after the war must be free from sentiments and emotions. There must be due regard for the realities of the situation. The discussion takes place on the assumption that it will be a government of free India. So, the question is: What will amount to freedom for the Indian people, and what will be the constitution as well as personal composition of the government which

can be expected to establish and defend that freedom? The freedom needed by the overwhelming majority of the Indian people is freedom from want; poverty is the tyrant who must be driven out of the country. The ideal of national freedom must be given an economic content. The next question is: Can India have that freedom under a National Government controlled by the capitalists and other, more reactionary, upper classes? That is the crucial question about the political future of India. A straight-forward answer to that question must determine the attitude of the progressive and genuinely democratic elements towards the fashionable demand for a National Government.

If the question is put in a different form, then it will be easier to find the answer. Can capitalism raise contemporary Indian society on a higher level and thus improve the economic conditions of the masses? This question can be investigated without being influenced by any sentiment or emotion. In the first place, it is necessary to ascertain what steps should be taken to improve the economic condition of the Indian masses. Then, it must be investigated whether those steps can be taken within the framework of capitalist economy. If the investigation leads to a negative result, then one must logically come to the con-

clusion that a National Government controlled by the older political parties will not mean freedom for India.

Capitalism raises society on a higher economic level by creating more productive employment for labour. The root cause of India's poverty is that the great bulk of her labour-power is practically wasted. Is more productive employment of a large volume of Indian labour possible on the basis of capitalist economy ? The purpose of capitalism is to produce commodities of exchange, to be sold for profit. Commodities can be sold at a profit when demand is greater than supply. Consequently, in order that more goods can be produced providing employment to more labour, the demand for the goods must increase. There is enough demand already in the country, but it is only a potential demand. The human demand must be converted into effective demand. In other words, the masses of the Indian people, who are suffering from the want of practically every elementary necessity of life, must have the money to buy it. That is the fundamental problem of Indian economy; how to raise the purchasing power of the masses ? As this problem immediately appears to be insoluble, the freedom needed by the Indian people, namely, the freedom from want, is conditional upon making available to them the most

essential necessities of life at the price they are at present in a position to pay. In other words, goods must be produced not for exchange, not to be sold at a profit, but very largely for the use of the community. Such production is not possible on the basis of capitalist economy. Therefore, under the given conditions of the country, capitalism cannot perform its historically progressive function, namely, employ labour more productively. Capitalism cannot free India from the tyranny of poverty.

It is obvious where this reasoning leads us. The economic condition of the Indian people can not be improved on the basis of capitalist economy. The freedom that the Indian people needs, namely, the freedom from want, can be provided only by Socialism. Evidently, that cannot be expected from a National Government controlled by the capitalists and other reactionary upper classes.

That is putting the problem crassly, so to say. It is necessary to do that, because there is a good deal of loose talk about freedom. A whole variety of people indulge in this talk. Every one of them has his idea of freedom. And those with power will naturally establish the kind of freedom they want. Since that will not be the freedom for the Indian people, it should not be celebrated as such

by those who stand for the freedom of the people. Yet, by supporting the demand for a National Government, as desired by the older political parties, unattached progressive and democratic elements are exactly doing that. Perhaps they are committing that mistake because, not being politicians in the first place, they did not have the time to think out their thoughts; nor did they have experience of public life which might have made them acquainted with the realities of the situation.

Immediately, that is to say, pending the war, a National Government will not be a lesser evil. Since the evil of the present regime cannot be cured, it must be endured. After the war, it will no longer be a choice between two evils, namely, Imperialism and National-Capitalism. It will be an entirely different kind of choice. It will be a choice between dictatorship under a national-capitalist State which, under the given world conditions, will be essentially Fascist, and a government of the people. In other words, it will be a choice between Fascism and Socialism. Imperialism and Parliamentary Democracy belong to past history. They may be still talked about; one haunting the world as a ghost, and the other justifying the sneaking desire for the re-establishment of the *status quo ante bellum*. After the

war, the makers of the new world will have to talk a different language. Democracy will survive Fascism only by becoming Social Democracy. If national freedom for India will be democratic freedom for the Indian people, then the fighters for Indian freedom should also think in terms of the new democracy of the future. In order to do so, they must cast off the emotional pre-occupations and loose thinking, which have until now attracted them to the fraudulent ideal of a National Government.

CHAPTER III

THE GREATER EVIL

WE are not of the opinion that the fighters for Indian freedom have to choose between continuation of the present regime and a National Government formed by the Congress or by a coalition of the older political parties. The problem is not of a choice between two evils. Evidently, there is another alternative, namely, the establishment of a genuinely democratic government—a government of the people and by the people. The qualification 'genuine' excludes the third term in the well known definition of a democratic government. A government "for the people" cannot be a genuinely democratic government. The third term in the definition nullifies the other two terms, which is the essence of democratic government. A government for the people allows delegation of power. And delegation of power invariably results in usurpation of power. Therefore, the parliamentary system failed to establish true democracy, and its failure encouraged the rise of Fascism representing a brazen negation of democracy.

We oppose the demand for a National Government with the demand for a People's Government.

We oppose the demand for the transfer of power to the upper classes represented by the older political parties with the slogan "All power to the people". This alternative course should be opened before India if freedom is not to be a fraud. That should be easily understandable to all intelligent leftists. But the leftists, nevertheless supporting the demand for a National Government, which will be inevitably controlled by the upper classes, most probably do so because they do not believe in the possibility of the third alternative. Before proceeding to prove that possibility, and pleading for independent action on the part of the progressive forces, we propose to show that the National Government of the Indian upper classes will indeed be a greater evil. In the last chapter we have disposed of the apologetic contention that it should be preferred as a lesser evil, the alternative being continuation of the present regime.

This discussion takes place on the basis of the agreement that the concept of freedom must have a concrete social content. Our appeal is to those genuine democrats who do not believe that the Indian people will be free as soon as Englishmen will be dislodged from all positions of power or altogether driven out of the country. People who can differentiate freedom from fraud know that a

country may be entirely free from all foreign control, and yet be without the last vestige of liberty. They know that the evils from which the Indian people should be free, namely, want, poverty and insecurity, are the result of the system of exploitation of man by man. It makes no difference whether the relation of exploitation is between men born in the same country or born in different countries.

The freedom needed by the Indian people is freedom from poverty and want. In the last chapter it has been shown that, under a National Government controlled by the upper classes represented by the older political parties, India would not attain that freedom. It may be argued that even to-day she is deprived of that freedom; so, why should the present regime be preferred to a National Government which will at least be no worse? This argument is based on the belief that National Capitalism will be less oppressive than foreign Imperialism; that, in any case, one capitalist regime will be replaced by another capitalist regime.

This argument ignores that the conditions in India, whether under a national-capitalist government or under a foreign government, cannot be isolated from the conditions of the world. The present regime, if it continues, as well as the

desired national-capitalist regime, will both be influenced by world conditions each in its own way.

It is not realised, not even by those who believe themselves to be Marxists, that even during this war the character of the present regime has changed. There may not have been the slightest change in the mentality or in the intentions of the men constituting the regime. But modern Imperialism is not a government established by people wishing to rule over others. Modern imperialist expension is economically motivated. The economic relation between India and Britain is the foundation of the present political regime in this country and determines its character. That relation cannot be immutable. It was changing even before this war. The change has accelerated under the impact of the war. It promises to be a very different relation after this war. Therefore, it is entirely unrealistic to rant against Imperialism. Indeed, as observed by a well known leftist writer, Imperialism has become an obsession with the Indian leftists. If the Government of this country before this war was imperialist, it cannot be called by that name to-day. Because the economic relation between Britain and India, which constituted the foundation of the regime five years ago, has since then changed considerably. The

present Government may be anything; it may be even worse than imperialistic; but it cannot be imperialist. Otherwise, we would be using terms without any regard for their meanings.

These considerations enable us to dispose off one confusion, which makes a dispassionate discussion of the actual issues so very difficult. It is not a choice between Imperialism and Nationalism; nor is it a choice between foreign capitalism and national capitalism. By rejecting National Capitalism, we do not prefer Imperialism. Simply because it is not there to be preferred; it is not one of the issues involved. For a correct judgment of the alternative of a national-capitalist regime, it is necessary to have a close look at the ghost which is haunting so many guileless leftists and driving them into a camp where they do not want to belong.

Export of capital is the basis of modern Imperialism. To put it in a less technical language, British capital invested in India was the instrument for exploiting the Indian people, and the function of the British Government of India was to protect that system of exploitation. It is simple to ascertain if this view corresponds with the present situation of India, and how the situation will further change after this war. Let it be repeated that the mentality and intentions of indi-

vidual Englishmen, whether engaged in business or still occupying official positions in this country, are entirely immaterial. If the situation changes essentially, they will have to adjust their mentality accordingly. As regards intentions, it is a matter of cutting one's coat according to the cloth. As a matter of fact, even now the Government of the country, though it still may be dominated by Englishmen, has become the administrator of the national-capitalist State. Englishmen still hold important positions in the economic life of the country; but the control is no longer in their hand. The more realistic and far-seeing among them are reconciling themselves to the modest role of commission agents,—to make profit to be distributed as dividends to Indian capitalists. One cannot correctly visualise political issues by ignoring these important changes in the economic life of the country.

But let us leave alone the symptoms, and go to the root of the situation. British capital invested in this country through Government loans has at last been eliminated. A considerable part of the capital directly invested in commercial and industrial enterprises has also passed on to Indian hands. Whatever still remains may be wiped out by the time this war is over. Of course, that will not eliminate Englishmen from the commercial

and industrial organisation of the country. Indeed, they may still hold important positions. But with the change in the ultimate ownership of capital, the control will go out of their hands. On the other hand, during the war, Britain has become heavily indebted to India. Any movement of capital from Britain to India after the war will go in the payment of debt, and therefore will not reinforce the severely shaken foundation of British Imperialism in this country.

People not acquainted with the ethics of business and international credit suspect that somehow or other India will be swindled out of her sterling balances in London. Making allowances for a possible devaluation of the rupee and other usual methods of financial operation, it can be expected that Britain will still remain indebted to India. That will mean a complete change in the relation between the two countries. Previously, India was indebted to Britain, and that was the foundation of the imperialist regime in this country. As India's credit in Britain is not very likely to be converted into capital invested there in industries, the new relation will not reverse the political relation between the two countries. The debt will have to be paid. And British capitalists will be only too glad to make the payment. Because, payment can be made only in goods, and

after the war British indstries will have to export goods, if for no other purpose then to import articles which were not available during the war.

The post-war world market will not be a sellers' market, as has been suggested by a high financial authority. It will be a buyers' market. During the war, the productive capacity of Britain has immensely increased. When war production will cease, and industries will have to produce for the open market, the production will be much more than can possibly be consumed in Britain even with all her enlarged demand for re-construction. Consequently, export will be a vital necessity for British industries. India's sterling balances in London will operate as subsidy for those exports. The Government wll pay for the goods exported from Britain to India.

The next step in the process of the development of the new economic relation will be related to the kind of goods exported from Britain to India. The low purchasing capacity of the Indian people sets a limit to the Indian market either for imported goods or goods produced in the country. Since that factor still remains in operation, British exports to India cannot be substantially increased. Payment being guaranteed by the British Government, the British exporter may want to dump. But the importers will have their say. They will

not take goods which cannot be sold, or will have to be sold at a low price. Consequently, the bulk of British export will have to be in capital goods rather than in consumers' commodities.

So, the changed economic relation will directly lead to the establishment of new industries in the country. Once industries are built, they will have to be operated; otherwise, the capital will be a dead investment. Commodities will be produced and they will have to be sold. For that purpose, the purchasing power of the people will have to be increased. We have already pointed out that any substantial increase in the purchasing power of the Indian people is conditional upon some radical changes in the established social relations. The policy of the Government of the country will be determined by that necessity. That is the perspective of the present regime, in spite of its mixed racial composition, completely transforming itself —to the extent of becoming an agency for bringing about revolutionary social changes which were obstructed for hundred and fifty years by Imperialism.

Marxist students of history know that the British conquest of India had a historically revolutionary significance. They should be able to visualise the possibility of the originally imperialist relation between the two countries consummating itself also

in revolutionary consequences. Tendencies in that direction are already manifesting themselves. Englishmen in this country may still appear to be immune from those tendencies. Even the British Prime Minister may shudder at the idea of his presiding over the liquidation of the Empire. But highly significant indications are to be detected in contemporary economic thought in Britain. The leaders of the British business community have not been slow to see the signs of time and plan their future accordingly. It is frankly admitted that Britain's commercial relation after the war must change, and that the future of that relation depends on increasing the purchasing power of the Indian people. The policy of the present Government of India, if it will continue unchanged after the war, will be determined by the new orientation of British business. In order to increase the purchasing power of the Indian people, necessary for the prosperity of British business, Indian economy must cease to be colonial. Not only will Imperialism liquidate itself; but while doing so, it will make the liberating values of capitalism accessible to India. So, if it is not possible for India to reach the goal of freedom from the exploitation of man by man except through an experience of capitalism, continuation of the present regime appears to be the lesser evil.

Apart from the fundamental economic factors, political developments in Britain can also be expected to influence the situation in India in the above sense. There cannot be any doubt that after the war Brtish politics will move to the Left. But left politics also will be economically motivated. In order to prevent lowering of wages in Britain, the British working class must demand a higher standard of living for the people in the so-called backward countries. That demand happens to coincide with the realisation of the British capitalists that their future in the world market depends on increased purchasing power of the peoples abroad. So, it will not be, say, the Labour Party replacing the Conservative Party. The entire British politics will shift to the Left. That again is a proof for the disappearance of Imperialism.

The post-war relation between Britain and India is more likely to be a relation of co-operation between two countries. In that situation, India is bound to feel the impact of progressive thoughts and democratic institutions triumphant in Britain. That would certainly create an atmosphere congenial for the Indian progressive forces to assert themselves. The presence of a few Englishmen in the administrative machinery of the country cannot possibly have any reactionary

influence. Indeed, those Englishmen will have to adjust themselves to the new atmosphere, and the old ones with die-hard prejudices will be replaced by people with the new spirit of co-operation.

But, we do not believe that this is the only alternative to a National Government controlled by the older political parties. There is another alternative. India can go directly towards a genuinely democratic People's Government. But assuming that it is a choice between continuation of the present regime and the National Government of the upper classes, we thought it necessary to show the possibilities of the other alternative, in the light of which possibilities, the lesser evil of a National Government appears to be the greater evil.

In the last chapter we showed that a National Government as demanded by the older political parties, and ill-advisedly supported by detached progressives, will not be able to introduce the revolutionary social changes which are indispensable for the normal capitalist development of a country. When, owing to the impossibility of capitalism functioning normally, the economic life of a country is caught in an insoluble crisis, the vicious circle can be broken in two directions—towards Socialism or towards Fascism. A govern-

ment controlled by the upper classes will certainly not allow developments in the former direction. In order to prevent such developments, it will have to encourage developments in the latter direction. The ground for such an attitude on the part of the National Government is being prepared by the profuse propaganda for unity. Leftists and progressives plumping for national unity, is another curiosity of the political situation in our country. They are sowing the wind to reap the whirlwind before long. As National Capitalism, with its economy of scarcity, will not be able to give any relief to the masses, the National Government will have to cope with widespread discontent throughout the country. The discontent will be condemned as antagonistic to national unity, and it will be suppressed for the sake of preserving national unity. Under the pressure of its own contradictions, National-Capitalism (autarchy) is bound to degenerate into Fascism. The National Government will consequently become a Fascist dictatorship.

Certainly that is to be dreaded as a greater evil, even if the leftists would still be haunted by the ghost of Imperialism. The choice between Fascism and Imperialism was placed before them already in the beginning of this war. For historical reasons, Imperialism became an obsession even

to the leftists in this country. Even those who called themselves Marxists forgot that no economic system or political institution could be permanent. Owing to that obsession, the leftists made a wrong choice in the beginning of the war. Their thoughts seem to be clouded by that mistake even to-day. Marxists should have realised that Fascism is a greater evil than Imperialism. Given that realisation, they would see their way clearly ahead in the political future of India. Because there the choice should be to avoid Fascism, which danger lurks behind the plausible demand for National Government and national unity. In search of a lesser evil, let us not deliver ourselves to the greater evil.

CHAPTER IV

FASHIONABLE BUT FRAUDULENT

ONE need not be a Marxist to see that the ideal of national unity has no bearing on realities of the situation, in any country, except where the very concept of nation has been revolutionised owing to a radical change in its social composition and economic foundation. Nevertheless, catching slogans such as national unity, national front, have become fashionable even with those who until yesterday operated with the hair raising cry of uncompromising class war. Even as a manoeuvre of opportunist politics, it would be bad enough. But this fashionable cult of national unity has become a general obsession. Therefore it is more dangerous.

This fashion is one of the by-products of the present war. It is maintained that the danger of Axis aggression compelled the prospective and possible victims to make up their internal differences and present a united national front. It is further maintained that without national unity effective resistance to Axis aggression would not be possible. In support of this view, it is pointed out that one country after another fell victim to Axis aggression because there was no national

unity. Great Britain is supposed to be the brilliant example of unity averting a national catastrophe. On the other hand, the fall of France is believed to be due to dissensions in the life of the nation.

In the case of India, all our misfortunes are attributed to the absence of national unity. Curiously enough, the identical argument is used on both sides. The British Government says that India's political progress is obstructed by dissentions in her political life and disagreement among the different sections of the Indian population. On the other hand, devotion to the mystic ideal of unity has become the badge of Indian patriotism—indeed, even of communism! Marx may be well turning in his grave. While blaming British Imperialism for the inability of the Indian political parties, communites and leaders to agree about the freedom they all profess to be striving for, Indian nationalists of all shades of opinion also preach unity to the extent of attaching to it greater importance than to liberty.

The political ideal of Akhand Hindusthan is the case in point. And Akhand Hindusthan is not a creed only of the Hindu Mahasabha. It is the creed of Indian Nationalism. All-embracing unity, a broad national front, is preached as the essential condition for overwhelming the imperia-

list opposition to Indian freedom. The Muslim League also professes anti-imperialism. It is prepared to join the anti-imperialist front, on condition that its demand for Pakistan will be accepted by other Indian parties. The latter, if they were anxious to form a united front against British Imperialism, should realise the decisive importance of Muslim co-operation. But being committed to the ideal of Akhand Hindusthan, they cannot accept the Muslim demand for Pakistan. So, the ideal of a united Indian nation—India one and indivisible—prevents the establishment of a united front against Imperialism. Since the ideal of national unity is so very contradictory, since pursuing the ideal, one is driven to such an absurd positon, it is necessary to subject it to a searching examination.

The propaganda carried on by Mr. Rajagopalachari and his associates, on the one hand, and by the Communist Party of India, on the other, for an agreement between the Congress and the Muslim League, can be dismissed in the very beginning of this examination of the concept of national unity. In this curious campaign, unity is being preached by two parties having absolutely nothing in common. We make this observation subject to correction by the Communist Party of India. If they have found unity of ideal and com-

monness of purpose with Mr. Rajagopalachari and his associates, we can only wish them luck. But the more realistic view of this curious combination would be that each party is working according to its purpose. The immediate object of both, however, is united national front against Imperialism. Whether Imperialism is still the real danger for the future of India, or it is a ghost haunting the obsessed, is a different question. It serves as the bogey to deceive and frighten gullible people.

However, this campaign for Congress-League unity can have very little result so long as the resolution of the A.I.C.C. meeting at Allahabad in 1942 remains on record. Mr. Rajagopalachari's propaganda becomes still less convincing in view of the fact that advocates of Akhand Hindusthan like Mr. K. M. Munshi are among his associates. Mr. Jinnah may be the devil of the Indian political drama. But he is not foolish enough to be taken in so very easily. The point is that with all the frantic and fanatical effort of the crusaders for unity, crusading for different, and often diametrically opposite, purposes, the ideal of national unity appears to be unattainable. If liberty is not possible without unity, then the fate of India seems to be sealed. Is the future really so dark and depressing?

The ray of hope results from a critical examination of the ideal which may be fashionable, but is also fraudulent, as we shall presently show. The political status of our country—dependence on an external authority—naturally adds force to the cry of unity. Nevertheless, the generally desired unity has not been attained. Why? Throwing the blame on the Government is not a convincing reply. The almost unbridgeable schism between the Muslims and the so-called caste Hindus may have resulted to some extent from the system of communal electorates. But what keeps the Congress and the Hindu Mahasabha separated? The nationalism of the Congress, ever since a Mahatma became its leader, is saturated with Hindu ideas, ideals and traditions. The Mahasabha, on the other hand, at least recently, has fully identified itself with Congress politics. The only bone of contention was the Communal Award. But one should remember that the Congress never accepted the Communal Award. The other difference is that while the Congress claims to represent the entire Indian people including the Muslims, the Mahasabha is exclusive. It is an organisation only of the Hindus. If national unity was a realisable ideal, and that unity should also have a geographical expression, then the Congress should be the platform of that unity. The very fact that

crusaders for unity to-day advocate a Congress-League coalition proves that they themselves admit that the Congrèss cannot be the platform of a united nation. That being the case, why not accept Mr. Jinnah's proposition which is to have two organisations, one of the Muslims and another of the Hindus, and then try for an agreement between the two? But then the implication of Mr. Jinnah's proposition would also have to be admitted. The implication is the theory of two nations. As soon as a united front against the external authority becomes a practical proposition, Indian politics comes within a measurable distance of unity, it becomes necessary to abandon the ideal of national unity itself. There is a possibility of two nations uniting against the common enemy. But the two cannot be welded into one, and on closer scrutiny, each one of them will be found to be divided against itself. National unity, which will be identical with the unity of all the peoples inhabiting the geographical unit called India, is at the best, nothing but a utopia. Is it necessary to run after a chimera in order to win freedom?

The proposal of an anti-imperialist, more correctly, anti-British, united national front is still more crassly contradictory. With their fanatical faith in national unity, the anti-imperialists, curiously enough, stand on the same platform with

the imperialists. The Muslim demand for Pakistan threatens disruption of the Indian Empire. Therefore, the British Government is also an advocate of Akhand Hindusthan. And under the given situation, India can remain one and indivisible only under the protection of the British Government. So, the logical consequence of the fanatical insistence on national unity is the forfeiture of the claim for liberty. In any case, both cannot be had together. If the whole of India is one nation, then national unity is not possible without the co-operation of the Muslim League. But the co-operation of the Muslim League cannot be had without conceding to the Muslims the right to break away from India. The crusaders of united national front, even of the opportunist variety like a Congress-League coalition, are evidently moving in a vicious circle.

If politically the platform of national unity is so very shaky, socially it is a positively dangerous conception. In countries with more homogeneous populations, joint efforts approximating national unity are possible as well as practicable. That has been the case in Britain during this war. But there also, the national unity is superficial, because it is purely political, and that also on one particular issue. The underlying social cleavages remain. The National Government has not abolish-

ed parties. And the parties themselves remain committed to their respective class affiliations and social outlooks.

In no other country, even during the present war, anything like national unity has been established. In the United States of America, not only the Republican Party carries on a ceaseless political warfare against president Roosevelt and the policies of his Government, including the war policy, but a powerful section of the Democratic Party itself is at loggerheads with the Government headed by a Democrat. Other antagonisms and contradictions are also clearly visible. Vice-President Wallace, representing the interests of the Middle-Western farmers, continuously levels serious charges against the industrialists and bankers who control the Government, and the charges include sabotaging war efforts. There have been frequent cases of serious conflict between labour and capital, and the Government has not been strictly impartial on all occasions. The currents and cross-currents under the surface of national unity on the issue of this war, which are so clearly visible in the United States, are in operation in all the other countries, except the Soviet Union where the concept of nation has been given an entirely different economic content and social composition.

China is held up as the most classical example of national unity. The fact, however, is that no other country is so hopelessly divided. Only a fraction of the country has been politically united under one government, and is engaged in the resistance to Japanese aggression. Wang Chin-wei and his associates do not cease to be Chinese simply because they have become proteges of Japan. The Communists and th Kuomintang do not constitute a happy family. India would most probably travel the Chinese way, if she had the freedom of choice. If a National Government could not unite the whole of China for resisting the Japanese invasion, there is no reason to believe that an Indian National Government would be more successful in the same enterprise. We shall have our Wang Chin-weis, and on the other hand Communists will be sniping at the National Government for which they are clamouring so much to-day. If they fail to do so, there will be others to perform that honourable and historically necessary task, and they may do more than sniping. This perspective of a possible political situation arises out of a realistic analysis of the relation of forces which constitute the present political life of the country.

If national unity with a geographical connotation is the political ideal, then those pursuing that

ideal should be thankful to have the present Government. Because this Government, which derives its constitutional status from an external authority, can alone guarantee Indian unity. A National Government would be able to do so provided that it would have the benefit of a sufficiently powerful foreign army of occupation. Then it would be a make-believe.

Parties and politicians working with their respective purposes may successfully exploit the anti-British feeling for their propaganda for national unity. But a unity built on that basis will not be a condition for the liberation of the majority of the people. It will only enable the minority, which is to-day exploiting the anti-British feeling, to capture power and utilise it for the defence of its privileged position. The expectation that a National Government, established on the strength of national unity in the form of a Congress-League coalition, will create conditions for a united national resistance against Japanese aggression, is evidently unfounded. Moreover, it is amazingly naive. It blissfully ignores the existence of Fascism inside the country. As a matter of fact, the fanatical advocates of national unity, in the midst of an atmosphere vitiated by sharpening class antagonism owing to the anti-social activities of the privileged minority, deny that there is any

Fascist Fifth Column in this blessed country. Every Indian is a revolutionary anti-imperialist fighter, and, Imperialism being identical with Fascism, no Indian can ever have any Fascist sympathy. That is the simplified reading of the Indian political situation. The stark fact, however, is that Subhas Bose has more following in this country than Mr. Rajagopalachari, not to mention the other end of the Axis of the national front.

Therefore, while a united national front against British Imperialism is at least *emotionally* possible, it will break to pieces as soon as a different enemy will have to be fought. And that enemy is not only this or that Axis Power, but the reactionary elements of the Indian society, who naturally find in Fascism their spiritual ally. The Defence of India Rules keep them underground. But that is only as regards their organised political activity. Physically they are everywhere in the country, even in the machinery of the Government itself. A National Government, which would deny the possibility of Indian Fascism because it would be Fascist itself, would therefore plunge the country into a civil war instead of establishing national unity.

The metaphysical conception of the State, which is the fundamental principle of Fascist political

philosophy, is inherent in the doctrine of national unity. Any human community, before it reaches an advanced stage of Socialism, is bound to be divided into classes and sections with divergent interests and aspirations. The single fact of formal poltical right and equality before law does not make a community so composed a homogeneous organisation. It is a matter of experience that political right does not necessarily confer effective political power. As regards equality before law, it makes all the difference who make the law. Of course, in a democratic country the Parliament makes the law, and the Parliament may be elected by universal suffrage. But even then, laws are not made in consultation with, and with the consent of, the entire people. They are made by members of the Parliament who may be under influences contrary and even antagonistic to general popular welfare.

Therefore, as soon as the factor of external authority will be removed, national unity will find its expression in the deification of the National State. The pseudo-philosophical doctrine of unity in diversity will come handy. The contradictions and antagonisms in the national life of the country—not only communal and religious, but social and economic—will be declared as subservient to the mystic will of the nation expressed

through the National State. All strivings of the common people, who even in a free India will remain outside the charmed circle of the privileged minority, will be suppressed as disturbing national unity, and the supression of the majority will be justified on the authority of the nation which will be usurped by the privileged minority. Those who are sowing the wind to-day with their catching slogans of unity, will then have to reap the whirlwind.

Hitler united the German people against the Versailles *Diktat*. The spell he cast on a majority of the German people while carrying on an apparently justifiable agitation for the vindication of national honour, enabled him to seize power; but he utilised the power to destroy the liberties of the German people. History may not repeat itself; but a similar combination of circumstances is bound to produce similar results. Fascism is not an article made in Germany. It is the political expression of reactionary nationalism.

India needs unity. But it must be a unity of those who are inspired by a common ideal and have the same purpose. They constitute the majority of the people. The will of the majority is the will of the people, and that must be regarded as the national will. In order to quicken that will to freedom, one should no longer operate with

negative slogans. The people must be united in the struggle against all their enemies, foreign and native. And it should be borne in mind that in the near future their freedom will be endangered more by their enemies inside the country than by the foreigners who are no longer any more dangerous than mere bogeys. If the ideal of freedom is not placed before and above the ideal of unity, then the latter will defraud the people of freedom.

CHAPTER V

A DANGEROUS FICTION

POLITICS is a social science. An equitable administration of society is the object of political practice. Honest and realistic political practice, therefore, must be adjusted to the given social relations. If political ideals, programme and slogans are not to be misleading, demagogic and deceptive, then they should have some bearing on the realities of the structure of society. As a matter of fact, throughout history, politics has been the instrument for changing social relations, whenever they were worn out, and for overhauling the entire superstructure of society on the basis of new relations. Otherwise, political practice would never attain the object of an equitable administration of society, and politics, instead of being an instrument of human progress, would build up a bulwark of reaction.

The catching slogan of national unity evidently does not fit into these fundamental considerations for political practice. Nevertheless, the concept of national unity dominates political thinking not only of India, but to some extent also of the entire world of to-day.

In Europe, the necessity of resistance to Axis aggression made the idea of unity on the part of the threatened nations plausible. But it should not be forgotten that in no case a nation or a country as a whole put up a unified resistance against the aggression of the Axis Powers. The latter operated as the spearhead of a political system which was to supplant democratic institutions. The challenge went deeper. Not only were the democratic political institutions to be supplanted, but their social and philosophical foundations were also to be blasted. That was the challenge of Fascism. This war is a result of that challenge. Therefore, it is not a military conflict between nations or countries, some having aggressive designs against others. Resulting from the Fascist challenge to democracy, this war is an international civil war.

The parties to this conflict, namely, Fascism and Democracy, have adherents in every country, not only in the countries directly involved in this war, but in all the countries of the contemporary world. That being the case, the idea of national unity is a fiction. Fictions are often harmless. But this is a dangerous fiction. The idea of national unity may have had some practical value in countries where democratic institutions were either destroyed or threatened by foreign aggression. But even

there, the idea of unity will be a danger for democracy if it would be the guiding principle of political practice even after the war.

It is a well known fact that during the period between the two wars Fascist ideas,—philosophical, economic and political,—spread more or less in every country. There was a general threat to democracy, not to democracy as hitherto known and practised, but to the implications of the concept of democracy. Every system lives by continually expanding itself. Democracy as a system of the political organisation of society cannot be an exception. It cannot be static.

The last war was waged to make the world safe for democracy. Cynics questioned the sincerity of that profession. The fact, however, was that the war did contribute to a physical expansion of democracy, so to say. Democratic institutions were established in a number of countries which had previously been without them. But the very territorial expansion of democracy, at the same time, revealed the inadequacy of the system as until then practised. For the stabilisation of the expansion of its political superstructure, the economic foundations of democracy had to be broadened and deepened. That required changes in the relations between different classes of the society. If the concept of national unity was not

a fiction, until then rather harmless, if society was really a homogeneous whole, there should be no difficulty in introducing the necessary changes. Because they were necessary for a more equitable administration of society as a whole. But the changes required for the attainment of the object of political practice, were opposed by certain classes of society which had until then enjoyed privileges to the detriment of others. The positive consequences of the last war thus threw democratic ideas and institutions in a crisis. Democracy could survive the crisis by outgrowing its inadequacies. That was inevitable if democracy was to live. The process of the necessary expansion of freedom threatening the privileges of certain classes could be arrested by destroying democracy. Because the process was inherent in democracy itself.

Fascism was the expression of the desire to prevent political practice supplanting reactionary social relations by new relations conducive to general progress. Therefore, by its very nature, Fascism was anti-democratic. The fact that Fascism, representing a challenge to democracy, claimed adherents in all the countries proves that national unity is not a condition for democratic freedom. As a matter of fact, in so far as the entire people inhabiting a particular country is

regarded as composing one nation, all the nations of the world were split into two camps on the issue of Democracy versus Fascism. That differentiation grew sharper until it precipitated the present military conflict. The countries where the general differentiation between the defenders and opponents of democracy resulted in the latter gaining the upper hand, became the spearhead of international Fascism. They eventually came to be known as the Axis Powers. But the Axis alliance was not confined to the three countries where Fascism had come to power. The enemies of democracy throughout the world operated as the allies of the Axis Powers. The initial victory of these latter was to a very large extent due to the services rendered by those allies.

While the conflict between the forces of progress and reaction split every nation into two camps, it was Fascism which revived the doctrine of national unity. The doctrine was preached with the object of isolating political practice from the realities of the given social relations. The doctrine of national unity indeed was an antithesis of democracy. Democracy is rule of the people. Democratic practice is to regard the verdict of the majority as the voice of the people. The challenge to democracy, therefore, comes from the minority which cannot retain its privileges if society is to

be administered according to the wishes of the majority. But the challenge cannot be effective unless those making it command forces strong enough to overwhelm the majority. Therefore, the opponents of democracy revived the old idea of national unity which, being the whole of the nation, must be greater than the barest majority. The abstract conception of national unity is thus pitted against the concrete expression of democracy, namely, the verdict of the majority. That is how, in this international civil war, the concept of national unity became an instrument in the hands of Fascism.

National unity and democracy are mutually exclusive concepts. The practice of majority rule presupposes what the doctrine of national unity postulates. If a nation was a homogeneous whole, if there was no conflict between the interest of one social class and that of another, there would be no majority, and there would be no basis for democratic practice. A transcendental national will is invented in order to override the verdict of democracy on the authority of the imaginary whole.

While this essentially Fascist doctrine of national unity represents a danger for European democracy, we are primarily concerned with its predominence in Indian politics. In this country,

the danger is all the greater because the general tendency is frankly to place the concept of the nation above the idea of democracy. The general demand is not for democratic freedom, but for national independence. In Indian nationalist politics, democracy enters only by implication, if at all. The democratic principle of self-determination is invoked in support of the demand for national freedom. Therefore, it is assumed that national freedom will mean democratic freedom. But there is absolutely no foundation for such an assumption. It is a well known fact of history, not only of past history, but of contemporary history, that national independence does not necessarily mean democratic freedom. India would be an independent nation if the present government was replaced by the rule of some native dynasty. Nationalists would most probably emphatically deny that such a change would satisfy them. But from the point of view of political theory, such a change would satisfy the demand for national independence. And once India becomes an independent nation, thanks to such a hypothetical change, the government would claim to represent the will of the nation, and the doctrine of national unity, which has became a fundamental principle of nationalist politics,

would militate against the advocates of democratic freedom.

Indeed, the very concept of nation is a political anachronism. It is a negation of the given realities of social relations which, after all, should be the basis of political practice. The stratification of Indian society and the conflict of the interests of the respective sections of the Indian people are too glaring to require any description. To talk of unity in the midst of such an atmosphere, is palpably absurd. What is there in common between the Princes and their subjects, between the landlords and their tenants? As a matter of fact, the present Indian society is sharply polarised. At the one end, is the overwhelming majority of the people steeped in poverty, all the avenues of economic progress closed for them, deprived of the elementary rights of modern citizenship; and at the other end, there is a small minority enjoying all the privileges of feudal relations as well as of capitalist exploitation, and, thanks to those privileges, aspiring to be the rulers of the country and recognised by the present Government as heir-apparents. The flag of nationalism floats at this pole of Indian society. If the entire Indian people were to be united under that flag, national unity would mean subordination of the majority to the privileged minority.

Evidently, that would be no democratic freedom. National unity may lead to national independence, replacement of the present Government by the rule of the Indian privileged classes. But it is not a condition for the freedom of the Indian people. On the contrary the doctrine of national unity is preached with the object of defrauding the Indian people of their right to be free.

The doctrine of national unity, preached under the given condition of sharp social polarisation, becomes plausible owing to the existence of a foreign government. The contention is that different sections of the Indian people may have diverse interests, but they are all oppressed and exploited by a common enemy; therefore they should unite with the common purpose of attaining freedom for all. But the question is: Will the freedom really belong to all when it will be attained? The movement for national independence, in the sense of replacing the present government by a government composed of Indians, may have general support of the entire Indian people. But the fact is that the movement is the creation of a certain class of the Indian people. And consequently the leadership of the movement remains with that class. The success of the movement will therefore place that class in power. Coming to power with the help of forces mobilised with

the doctrine of national unity, that class cannot be expected to lay down the weapon which has been so very useful. In power, it would claim the loyalty and support of a united nation for consolidating national independence, for making the nation prosperous and great.

The popular forces, on the other hand, will have little excuse to withhold loyalty and support from the class which they will have put in power as the representative of the nation—the vehicle of the national will. The majority must submit itself to the minority in power, so that national unity may be maintained, and the will of the nation be manifest. It is, therefore, easy to see how Fascism, the negation of democracy, lurks behind the plausible call for unity in the struggle for national freedom.

As against the dangerous fiction of national unity, the rude realities of the Indian situation should be exposed, if politics is to be practised with the object of establishing the rule of the people. Identity of interest is the basis for an abiding and fruitful unity in political action. The majority of the Indian people can be united, because they have the identical interest of liberating themselve from the shackles of poverty, ignorance and general backwardness. If the deceptive ideal of national independence is replaced by the

concrete object of democratic freedom, then unity becomes a practical proposition. But in that case, the myth of national unity will be exploded. Because, as soon as the majority of the Indian people will demand the kind of freedom they want, and try to capture power for establishing that freedom, they will have to contend with enemies who are not only parts of the Indian nation, but are to-day claiming to be leading the nation towards freedom.

The acid test for the fraudulent doctrine of unity is the question: unity for what? Subjected to that test, the dangerous nature of that doctrine is exposed. If the object of unity is freedom, then those who are asked to unite must know what sort of freedom is offered to them. But the apostles of unity operate with an abstract concept of freedom. Because all the classes of Indian Indian society cannot aspire for the same sort of freedom. The nature of freedom for each is determined by the present conditions of its existence. Therefore, there cannot be an identical ideal of freedom which can inspire every human being inhabiting this sub-continent of India. There being no common ideal of freedom, the call for unity for freedom has either no meaning, or it is misleading.

The majority of the Indian people, like the

majority of people in any other country, can be united in their ideal of freedom. But the attainment of that ideal will be prejudicial for the privileged minority. The latter, therefore, cannot be reliable champions of people's freedom. Yet, according to the doctrine of national unity, the people must accept the leadership of the minority which, by virtue of its own interest, is bound to be enemy of people's freedom. National unity thus is an extremely dangerous fiction. It does not exist, and the faith in this fiction is fraught with grave dangers for the people to whom the faith is being fanatically preached.

CHAPTER VI

THE OTHER ALTERNATIVE

EVEN the immediate political future of India is not a matter of choice between two evils. A National Government, controlled by the Indian capitalists and other reactionary classes, through the older political parties and leaders, is not the only alternative to the present regime and its continuation after the war. The leftists who are reconciled to such a National Government, preferring it as a lesser evil, do so because they cannot conceive of another alternative.

Such a National Government may be the ideal of the average nationalist, who is moved rather by racial animosity than by any serious political or social consideration. They would be satisfied with the replacement of the present government by any Indian government. Any government composed exclusively of Indians will be welcomed by them as the National Government. They have only one condition in this respect. Indians forming the National Government must belong to, or have the confidence of, the older political parties, particularly the Congress and the Hindu Mahasabha. Co-operation of the Muslim League will be acceptable to them on the basis of

National unity, that is to say, provided that the Muslim League will be prepared to waive the Muslims' right of self-determination. But, in the last analysis, Muslims have no place in the scheme of orthodox Nationalism except as a minority to be tolerated if it behaves itself. Racial Nationalism has no positive political or progressive social content, but it claims to have a cultural foundation. Hinduism is the cultural foundation of orthodox Nationalism. Therefore, a Mahatma came to be its leader. The Mahatma is not the leader of the Congress. He is the leader of Indian Nationalism inspired, in addition to racial animosity, by the traditions of Hinduism old or modern, orthodox or reformed, Catholic or Protestant. From the arch-reactionary Hindu Sanatanists all the way to the Gladstonian Liberals of India, every Indian nationalist accepts the leadership of the Mahatma.

A government composed of such nationalists cannot be regarded even as a really National Government (it will certainly not be a democratic government) by intelligent (as against emotional) leftists, for whom the ideal of freedom has concrete political and social contents. Therefore, they can support the demand for the establishment of such a government only as a lesser evil, as they admittedly do. Presumably, they do so

because they can conceive of no other alternative. We have shown that it would be a mistake to welcome such a National Government even as a lesser evil; that it would be indeed the greater evil. In the very beginning of this discussion, we asked the question if there was no alternative to the choice between the two evils. Already then, we suggested that there was another alternative. Having shown that, if it were really a choice between continuation of the present regime, with some inevitable changes to take place immediately after the war, and a national-capitalist government, from the point of view of the great majority of the Indian people, the former should be preferred, now we shall show that the choice is really not so limited; that there is another alternative.

The alternative is a People's Government,—a genuinely democratic regime, under which the people will have effective political power and will be able to create their own instruments for exercising it. Is it possible to establish such a regime in India? There is no question about all intelligent and honest leftists desiring the establishment of such a regime. The question can be answered with the old saying that where there is a will, there is a way. But the retort to such an answer will be equally classical: One may will

as he wills, but one may not be able to act as he wills. So, we shall have to see if the leftists in India to-day are in such a helpless position: If a People's Government, which will establish real freedom for the people, is only a matter of wishful thinking under the given conditions.

The fatalistic leftist view about the immediate political future of India is determined by two considerations: theoretical and pragmatic. One cannot call himself a Socialist, Communist or Marxist or even progressive Democrat, and yet maintain that any Indian is better than any Englishman; that every Englishman is an Imperialist, whereas every Indian is a friend of the people. The leftist, to whichever of the above categories he may belong, justifies his support to the demand for a National Government of the racial conception, by the theoretical argument that in a colonial country the nationalist bourgeoisie is a revolutionary factor. The soundness of the theory was questioned even when it was first formulated nearly a quarter of a century ago. Such a theoretical proposition can be advanced only as a corollary to the older theoretical view that capitalism is a progressive force which introduces revolutionary changes in society. Both are Marxist theoretical propositions. Therefore, they should be referred back to

the fundamental principle of Marxism. They should be judged by that standard. The fundamental principle is that no social system is eternal or immutable; that therefore one social class may be revolutionary in one period of history, and become counter-revolutionary in a dicerent period. It is a generally accepted view among Marxists that capitalism has exhausted all its progressive possibilities. The revolutionary role of the bourgeoisie is the result of their association with the capitalist mode of production. Therefore, they cannot be expected to play any revolutionary role when capitalism itself ceases to be a progressive force.

This line of argument can be countered by the contention that colonial economy galvanises decayed feudalism; that Imperialism did not allow India to experience bourgeois revolution; that the latter, being historically necessary must still take place in India; therefore the bourgeoisie has still a revolutionary role to play. This is a very mechanical application of Marxist theory.

The role of Imperialism was to bring the entire world within the framework of the capitalist economy. The entire world economy having become capitalist, capitalism cannot operate as a revolutionary force in any particular part of the world in this period of its general decline. Conse-

quently, the bourgeoisie in no country can any longer play a revolutionary or even a partially progressive role. There is no theoretical justification for making an exception in the case of the Indian nationalist bourgeoisie. No such justification is to be found in Marxism.

We have examined economic problems of contemporary India and also how those problems will be in the post-war period. The examination has led to the result that the problems cannot be solved within the limits of the capitalist mode of production. It is worse than dogmatism to operate with theories in abstraction. Therefore, the theoretical justification for leftists supporting the demand for a National Government of the older political parties is not valid.

Now let us examine the other justification of their attitude. It is maintained that the Congress commands the confidence of the Indian masses. From that assumption, the factual foundation of which is still to be examined, it is concluded that to oppose the Congress demand for a National Government is to cross the will of the people. The argument is clinched with the rhetoric exclamation that you cannot disregard the will of the people, and talk of democracy. Our rejoinder is equally simple: You are confounding democracy with demagogy.

If we look into the factual foundation of the assumption that the Congress represents the will of the Indian people, the view of the leftists making this assumption will be exposed to be very superficial. In its hey day, the Congress did not claim more than four million members. Altogether compared to the Indian population even that is like a drop in the ocean. Four million members of a political party is something unprecedented. But Marxists who have worked as Congress members also know that not more than a very tiny fraction of those four millions could be considered as qualified for the membership of a political party. For one thing, the membership role was inflated. It is not an exaggeration to say that perhaps half the members existed only on the rolls. Secondly, most of the members, who physically existed, outside the roll, did not know that they were members of a political party. That much about organisational technicality. Politically, the position was still worse. Even for the vast bulk of the physically existing members the attachment was not to an organisation, but to an individual. And the individual again did not incorporate a political ideal, but was venerated and worshipped as a Saint. So, the Congress, in so far as it is a mass organisation, is not political but religious.

Another fact must be borne in mind. The Congress membership touched the peak when Congress Ministries were in office. The lower Congress Committees during that period were very largely operating as agencies of the Government. At least, that is how they were regarded by the ignorant masses. Fictitious or forcible enrolment of members was made often through local government officials. In the cities and towns, industial workers were enrolled *en masse* as Congress members through the instrumentality of the entire organisation. These facts lead to the conclusion that even in the hey day, the Congress could not be regarded as the political party of the Indian masses.

Notwithstanding all these defects and fraudulent claims, the Congress undoubtedly came to wield a considerable political influence on the common people. But the credit for that belongs not to the orthodox Congressmen; it belongs very largely to the leftists working inside the Congress. The differentiation between orthodox Congressmen and leftists working inside the Congress is important. Because, from the official Congress point of view, none but a Gandhist could be an orthodox and reliable Congressman. On the other hand, the leftists could not be honest even to themselves if they did not reject Gandhism. In

spite of their precarious position inside the Congress, the influence of the Congress, in so far as it was political, spread to certain sections of the masses through the instrumentality of the leftists. Having, for ill-conceived tactical purposes, brought a certain section of the masses under the political influence of the nationalist bourgeoisie, and thus created a situation in which the Congress could claim to represent the political will of the masses, the leftists now maintain that the masses would be brought nearer to freedom if they were delivered to the tender mercies of National-Capitalism armed with political power. Even the present demand for a National Government would not even be known to the masses but for the fanaticism of some leftist groups.

This analysis of the part played by the leftists in the past as Congressmen is not a condemnation. The object is to give them some self-confidence. It is to show that, except through their instrumentality, the Congress could not have acquired the political influence on the masses, and therefore the influence cannot be retained if the leftists will withdraw their support. We have shown that this support is given on false expectations. There is no theoretical justification. Tactically, it is bound to be harmful for the masses. Therefore, it should be abandoned.

Even before the war, the leftists working inside the Congress should have realised that the organisational machinery could never be brought under democratic control. As long as there was a possibility of developing the Congress into a people's party, it was correct tactics on the part of the leftists to make it popular with the masses. But once it became clear that the Congress could not be freed from the control of National-Capitalism and other more reactionary interests, it was no longer permissible for the leftists to act as the political link between the Congress and the masses. Leftists with a clear understanding of Marxism and a realistic appreciation of the changing relation of classes underlying the political life of the country, realised that they had reached the parting of ways. The issues became sharp upon the outbreak of the war, and they were either expelled from, or left, the Congress.

But others failed to adjust their tactics to the changing situation and continued activities with the object of attracting the masses to the Congress, even when the latter could serve no other purpose than that of National-Capitalism; and capitalism in no country could have any liberating significance in the present period of general capitalist decline.

Whatever may have been the extent of the

mass influence of the Congress in the past, of late it has been visibly ebbing. The failure of the sabotage movement of last year very largely damped mass enthusiasm for the Congress. Even among the lower middle class, which has always been the social basis of the Congress, there is growing disillusionment. On the other hand, leading organisations of merchants and industrialists have come out in the open as the stout champions of the Congress, and the demand for the National Government is evidently their demand. Smaller political groups and older leaders, who formally stood to the right of the Congress, have now become Congressmen all except in name. Liberal politicians, who in the past vehemently opposed the "extremism" of the Congress, have to-day become more royalist than the king.

There is no spontaneous mass support for the Congress or for the demand for the National Government. The appearance of any such support is the result of the misguided political activity of some leftist groups. If those activities stop, the Congress, *politically*, will be completely isolated from the masses, and will be exposed as what it really is—the party of National-Capitalism and of other more reactionary social interests. Thus, there is no pragmatic justification either for the

leftists supporting the demand for National Government. It is not a fact that the Congress commands a spontaneous support of the masses. The sentimental attachment is still there, but that is not political, but religious, personal, at the best. Therefore, the Congress demand for National Government does not reflect the will of the Indian people; to oppose the demand is not to delay the triumph of Indian Democracy. On the contrary, to support a demand which is evidently the demand of National-Capitalism is to prejudice the cause of people's freedom.

It may be argued that to oppose the demand for National Government with the demand for a People's Government is easy enough; but how to enforce the demand? Our answer is obvious. Since the activity of certain leftist groups and the whispering propaganda carried on by organisationally unattached progressive intellectuals are responsible for whatever popular support there is for the demand for National Government, the popular sanction for the alternative demand for a People's Government can be created if only the above activities and propagandist efforts will be canalised in the right direction. As a matter of fact, the sanction for the alternative demand can within a short time be much stronger than the support for the demand for a National Govern-

ment. Because, it will be really the will of the people, as against the interest of the upper classes represented by the older political parties. How to create that sanction? That is the question for the leftists.

We have time and again replied the question, and the Radical Democratic Party in co-operation with other progressive groups and individuals has been enlisting popular support for the alternative demand for a People's Government. If all the leftists join hands, the other alternative to the choice between two evils will be quite a practical proposition. What is necessary is self-confidence on the part of the leftists, who are still pursuing a policy bound to defeat their own end. The second thing necessary is a realistic appreciation of the actual relation of forces, unhampered by theoretical presuppositions.

The greatest obstacle to all the leftists joining in the effort for establishing really democratic freedom through the instrumentality of a People's Government is the erroneous and entirely un-Marxist doctrine of national unity. Under the given circumstances, the dubious ideal of national unity can be attained only by delivering the masses to the tender mercies of National-Capitalism operating through the Congress. National unity under the leadership of the bourgeoisie in

this period of capitalist decay is an ideal which can be attained only through the establishment of a Fascist State. The alternative to a People's Government cannot be conceived by the leftists obsessed with the dangerous idea of national unity. If they will take the trouble of brushing up their understanding of Marxism, they will find absolutely no theoretical justification for their supporting this essentially Fascist doctrine of national unity.

Once the deck will be cleared, preconceived notions will be discarded, and the mistaken policy pursued as realistic tactics will be abandoned, it will be possible for all leftists to march together towards their common goal of liberation of the oppressed masses.

CHAPTER VII

PEOPLE'S GOVERNMENT

THE manifesto of the Radical Democratic Party,* issued since we suggested the alternative of a People's Government, indicates the way to that direction. It outlines a plan of action for creating popular sanction for the demand that, instead of the upper classes usurping the right of self-determination, it should be exercised by the democratic masses. The plan of action provides a platform much broader than that of the fictitious national unity to be established upon an agreement amongst the older political parties.

As against the vague conception of a National Government, champions of people's freedom should come forward and place before the country a concrete picture of democratic freedom. The fundamental principles of the Constitution of a democratic State formulated in the manifesto of the Radical Democratic Party, constitute such a picture. It is a picture of freedom which is needed by the majority of the people in order to live like civilised human beings and to have opened before them all the avenues of progress.

***_Vide_, Appendix.**

The idea of a Constituent Assembly has been before the country for a considerable time. Older parties and leaders have never taken kindly to the idea. When it was ultimately incorporated in the Congress programme it was vulgarised. In any case, it was never explained how the Constituent Assembly will come into being. A concrete suggestion about the realisation of the idea of the Constituent Assembly was finally made in the offer of the British War Cabinet with which Sir Stafford Cripps came to this country last year. The Constituent Assembly visualised in the Cripps offer, however, would not be an instrument in the hand of the Indian people to exercise their sovereign right of self-determination. The proposal was that Provincial Legislative Assemblies, elected under the Government of India Act of 1935, would meet as the Constituent Assembly.

Universal suffrage is the condition *sine qua non* for the establishment of a democratic government. Therefore, the Constituent Assembly, which is to frame the fundamental law of the future government of the country, must be elected by universal suffrage. The electorate created by the Government of India Act of 1935 does not embrace more than thirteen per cent of the adult population. For the Federal Legislature, it is

even more restricted. The illiteracy and general political backwardness of the Indian masses are pointed out as the argument against the introduction of universal suffrage. This fallacious argument carries weight also with the older Indian parties and leaders. Although this argument against the introduction of universal suffrage cannot be taken as conclusive, practical difficulties on the way cannot be overlooked. It is for the advocates of democratic freedom to remove those difficulties, and claim for the people as a whole the right of self-determination.

The deplorable fact of mass illiteracy cannot be removed from to-day to to-morrow. Its removal will result from the establishment of democratic freedom. Even formal political freedom will not do. Mass illiteracy is the result of poverty. Therefore, improvement in the economic condition of the masses must take place before the evil of mass illiteracy can be cured. Economic betterment of the masses, in its turn, is conditional upon effective political power in the hand of the people. It is not difficult to make the masses understand this sequence of cause and effect. In other words, pending the creation of conditions for the eventual removal of mass illiteracy, the people can be politically educated, and a minimum measure of political education will qualify

them to exercise the right and discharge the responsibility of citizenship.

The plan of action outlined in the manifesto of the Radical Democratic Party will impart to the masses the minimum measure of political education with the result that the argument against the introduction of universal suffrage will no longer be valid.

It is a matter of world-wide practice that universal suffrage does not necessarily guarantee genuine democratic freedom. It does not enable the people to exercise effective control on the government of the country. In other words, a formally democratic government is not necessarily a people's government. But to be really democratic, a government must be government of the people, as distinct from a government *for* the people. An atomised electorate cannot wield effective power; the sovereignty of the people consequently becomes an empty concept. An organised electorate creates the guarantee for real domocratic freedom. Political education of the masses necessarily results from the organisation of the electors.

The campaign for the popularisation of the fundamental principles of a democratic State, proposed in the manifesto of the Radical Democratic Party, will impart political education to

the masses. The People's Committees arising out of this campaign will be instruments for organising the would-be electorate to the Constituent Assembly which will frame the fundamental law of the democratic State. The Radical Democratic Party has been carrying on this campaign already for some time. If all the progressive forces will respond to its appeal and participate in this campaign, the conditions for the establishment of a People's Government will be created in a very short time. The entire adult population of the country, organised in a network of People's Committees, will before long challenge the claim of the older political parties representing the upper classes that power should be transferred to them. Evidently, the claim of the entire adult population operating through the People's Committee will be much more legitimate, and having a powerful sanction behind it, it will be irresistible.

The People's Committees will prepare electoral rolls embracing the entire adult population. The propaganda carried on by them for enlisting support for the fundamental principles of the Constitution will result in the minimum measure of political education of the electorate enabling the latter to vote intelligently when the time to do so will come. Thus the technical difficulties for the

introduction of universal suffrage will be removed, and it will not be possible to oppose this fundamental democratic measure on the ground of mass illiteracy.

The meeting of the Constituent Assembly, elected by a politically educated and organised electorate, as the instrument for the exercise of the right of self-determination by the people as a whole, thus becomes a practical proposition. But it will be the culminating point of a process of political development. There will be two stages in it. The first stage will be terminated by the National People's Convention endorsing the fundamental principles of the future Constitution of the country. The second stage will be marked by the establishment of a Provisional People's Government commanding the support and confidence of the majority through the People's Committees, and by the preparations for the meeting of the Constituent Assembly to promulgate the Constitution of the Democratic State. Given the fact that the Government of India Act 1935 has broken down, it must be replaced by a more workable Constitution, and the recognition of India's right of self-determination by the British Government, there should be no obstacle to this line of political development.

The initiative has been taken by the Radical

Democratic Party. Let all champions of democratic freedom join hands, and India will have a People's Government soon after the war. As a matter of fact, she may have that blessing even earlier, if the progressive forces will have the courage to undertake the task of rallying the people on a new platform. If they did that, the influence of the older political parties, maintained through their intermediary, and also by demagogy, will rapidly decrease. Actuated by a nobler and more constructive spirit than racial animosity, the democratic masses will have confidence in their own power and assert themselves on the situation. The political atmosphere will clear out, and the road to freedom will be open before India.

Even within the limitations of the Government of India Act of 1935 it is possible to have governments more democratic than Congress Ministries or Coalition Ministries controlled by the older political parties. Provincial People's Conventions of delegates elected by local People's Conventions, as suggested by the Radical Democratic Party, can immediately challenge the representative character of the present Provincial Legislatures. The demand should be either re-election of the Provincial Legislatures, or formation of Provisional Provincial Governments composed of

people who are more representative than those elected by a restricted franchise. If the latter procedure is opposed on the ground that it is not permissible under the given Constitution, and re-election of the Provincial Legislatures is also delayed on the ground of the war situation, then the progressive forces striving for the establishment of a People's Government will have to wait until the war is over. They can afford to wait, because that will give them time to educate the people politically and consequently increase their chances of contesting the elections more successfully.

About sixty per cent. of the electorate created by the Government of India Act of 1935 is composed of peasants. The older political parties controlled by vested interests and representing the upper classes can sway such an electorate only by demagogy and by appealing to the communal and religious sentiments. A People's Party with a concrete programme of immediate popular welfare can easily contest the rural seats and win most of them. Therefore, even under the present Constitution, a People's Party stands a very good chance of being returned as the majority group in the Provincial Legislatures. That will be a long advance towards the establishment of a People's Government. Pro-

vincial Ministries formed by the People's Party will be free from the influence of vested interests and, by helping the People's Committees to carry on their constructive activities, will create an atmosphere in which freely and intelligently elected people's representatives will be able to meet in the Constituent Assembly to frame the fundamental law of a democratic State.

The constitutional position of the Central Government will be the baffling problem of the period of transition. The Central Legislature is even more antiquated than the Provincial Legislatures. But even after the war it cannot be re-elected. The federal part of the Government of India Act of 1935 has been practically scrapped. But it will be an incongruous position to keep the older Constitution Act in force in the Centre while the provinces will be governed by a more liberal Constitution. So, as soon at the war emergency is over, there must be a Provisional Central Government. What will be its constitutional position? What will be the legal source of its authority? The only solution of this baffling problem which suggests itself is the creation of a Provisional Government in the Centre commanding the confidence of the newly elected Provincial Legislatures. That will give the *ad hoc* Central Government an indirect constitutional status. It

will remain in office until the new Constitution is promulgated by the Constituent Assembly. In the meantime, the Provisional Central Government will rest also on the popular franchise expressed through the National People's convention. In addition to the indirect constitutional status, it will have the practical democratic authority derived from the sovereignty of the people.

Until a fully democratic constitution is promulgated, the Provisional Central Government will have to be formed by the Viceroy. But, the present Central Legislature having no constitutional status, and its re-election under the 1935 Act being impossible, the Viceroy must be guided by the result of new elections of the Provincial Legislatures while constituting the Provisional Government in the Centre. If the People's Party wins the elections to the Provincial Legislatures, its representatives will necessarily constitute the Provisional Central Government. No other democratic practice will be open to the Viceroy.

As the Constituent Assembly will be convened by the Provisional Government, the democratic composition of this latter will necessily influence the entire process of the framing of the Constitution or the future government of India. The

benefit of a People's Government will thus be guaranteed to her.

This whole process of almost predetermined development towards the freedom of the Indian people, however, is conditional upon the rejection of the dogma of national unity. Misled by this dogma, progressive elements and even those passing as uncompromising revolutionaries have been working for the establishment of a National-Capitalist regime which, under the given conditions of the world, cannot but be a Fascist dictatorship. It is misleading to talk about Indian freedom. There are two Indias. The India represented by the older political parties is one. There is another India. None can claim to be a champion of freedom, a democrat, a progressive, much less a socialist or a communist, if he does not identify himself with the other India, which has no place in the India of the older political parties clamouring for a National Government.

The other India constitutes the overwhelming majority of the Indian people, and therefore the right of self-determination belongs to it. It must be made conscious of its right—and of its power. Once that is done, India will have a People's Government. The task of all champions of freedom and progress, therefore, is to challenge the pretension of the older political parties to repre-

sent the Indian people. The expression of that challenge will be the rise of a People's Party, with the object of establishing a People's Government as against the Fascist dictatorship of ambitious Indian Capitalism allied with all the reactionary forces in Indian society.

It is a fight for leadership. If the progressive elements have the courage to take up this fight, they are sure to win. The first battles will have to be fought during the re-election of the Provincial Assemblies which will most probably take place immediately after the war. Preparations for this fight must be undertaken from now. A concrete picture of freedom needed by the people must be placed before them. The negative record of the older political parties, particularly of the Congress, which for two decades commanded the confidence of the people, should be exposed. It must be clear that the fight for Indian freedom is a fight between two Indias: One represented by the older political parties; and the other, until now very largely inarticulate, and swayed by the demagogy of political charlatans, composed of the majority who must progress and prosper if India is to be really free.

The more you talk about national unity and support the fraudulent propaganda that a National Government will cure all the evils of

India, the less you help the Indian people to march towards freedom. Those who admit that a National Government will only be a lesser evil, should now see that there is another alternative, and that there is nothing to stop them from marching straight ahead towards the goal of freedom as they conceive it. A National Government will be established only if the major political parties can maintain the appearance of their having the support of the people. So, ultimately it is the people which will determine the political development of the country. Why should not the people then act independently and, instead of putting their exploiters in power, take the power in their own hand and work out their own destiny?

Rally the people under the banner of a People's Party, and the older political parties will cease to be the dominating factor of the situation. Then, a People's Government will come into existence automatically in course of the constitutional development which is bound to take place in the near future.

APPENDIX

POSSIBLE POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS AND THE CHANCES OF INDIAN FREEDOM

—*A MANIFESTO*—

Issued by the Central Executive Committee of the Radical Democratic Party on 21st September, 1943.

THE war is nearing its end. The controversy regarding India's relation to it, which confused the political life of the country for these four years, is now antiquated. India will still have to serve as the base of operations against Japan. But the danger of invasion by Japan has practically disappeared. The war in the East may continue for some time after the war in Europe is terminated. Whatever may be the attitude of the older political parties regarding India's relation to the war during the remaining period, that can no longer affect the ultimate result of the war. Therefore, it is useless to continue the controversy in that connection even to-day. Whatever may have been the difference in the past, now all fighters for Indian freedom must focus their attention on the post-war period. What is going to happen in India and to India after the war is over? That is the question of the moment.

The older parties and leaders may still continue the agitation for termination of the constitutional deadlock, which was created by the controversy about India's relation to the war. But there is little possibility of any constitutional change during the remaining period of the war. The Government feels, not without reason, that it can carry on the war without any greater co-operation of tthe people. Therefore, the argument that without a National

Government India's manpower and resources cannot be harnessed for winning the war, does not carry any weight with the Government; nor are other Allied Powers impressed by it.

The expectation that American intervention will compel the British Government to come to terms with the Congress has become equally untenable. It is quite clear now that the vast bulk of American public opinion as well as the American Government is for the moment concerned with India only as a base of military operations against Japan. Americans visiting this country during the last year and a half seem to have convinced themselves, by a closer acquaintance with the situation, that neither is the establishment of a National Government indispensable for guaranteeing the success of projected military operations, nor can the nationalist anti-British feeling seriously disturb the situation so as to prejudice them. Consequently, the pro-Indian agitation in America has of late been waning. Progressive opinion in America, of course, still remains sympathetic to Indian aspirations, but realises the difficulty of introducing such far-reaching constitutional changes as would satisfy older Indian political parties who opposed India's participation in the war, except on that condition.

In India, the agitation for the termination of the so-called deadlock is carried on as a matter of prestige. Thanks to the decisively favourable war situation and the perspective of victory in the near future, the Government is not likely to be eager for a settlement on the terms of the opposition parties. Therefore, if the Congress leaders were released, they would find themselves in a rather embarrassing position. Realising that, they themselves do not seem to be very eager to come out of prison, which they

can do any day by simply withdrawing the Bombay resolution of the A.I.C.C.; and if it is true that the Congress leaders did not intend that the movement launched upon their arrest should develop in the way it did, they should have no objection to disowning that movement. Thus, the release of the Congress leaders depends entirely on themselves. But as there is no chance of their being released from prison to be the rulers of the country immediately, it is a matter of political expediency for them to wear the martyr's crown of thorn until a more favourable turn of the situation. If they came out now, to remain in political wilderness, it would be proved conclusively that their political strategy was futile. That will inevitably shake the popular confidence placed in them. The Congress leaders therefore, naturally, are reluctant to take that risk, and have been discouraging all practical moves which might secure their release, such as the plan of the A.I.C.C. members out of jail meeting to rescind the Bombay resolution.

Under these circumstances, no constitutional changes during the remaining period of the war are possible. But they will surely take place after the war. That perspective does not result from any faith in the declarations of the British Government. Constitutional changes are bound to take place as soon as the military emergency will be over, simply because the Government of India Act of 1935 has broken down. It must be replaced by a more workable, if not a more liberal Constitution. If India fails to take the initiative, once again a Constitution will be imposed on her by the British Parliament.

The British Government's challenge to the Indian parties to produce an agreed Constitution has not yet been taken up. There is no reason to believe that after the war the older political parties and commu-

nalist organisations will compose their quarrels. Irreconcilable shibboleths are the basis of their very existence. But, for the sake of prestige, they will most probably resist another Constitution being imposed by the British Parliament, irrespective of its merits or defects. Consequently, there will be another deadlock, and the political progress of the country will be indefinitely delayed, unless the masses of the people are mobilised on a platform broader than that provided by the older political parties and communalist organisations.

India's advance towards freedom, therefore, does not depend either on the good will of the British Government, or on an agreement among the older political parties. Popular initiative alone can promote India's political progress by removing the obstacles to the necessary constitutional changes and moulding these changes so as to make them at least partially instrumental for the establishment of genuine democratic freedom.

To organise popular initiative in that direction, therefore, is the task of the moment for all the fighters for, and champions of, the freedom of the Indian people. They will accomplish that task by placing before the people the fundamental principles of the Constitution of a Democratic State and enlisting their conscious support for these principles. Once a concrete picture of the freedom they want is placed before the people, they will be inspired with enthusiasm and develop the will to attain it by their own efforts.

The Radical Democratic Party has formulated the following as the Fundamental Principles of a Constitution which will establish people's freedom, and has been carrying on propaganda to popularise them :

1. The supreme sovereignty belongs to the people, to be exercised through the direct control of the executive as well as the legislative function of the State, by the elected representatives of the people.

2. The Federal Democratic State of India is to be composed of a number of autonomous republics built on the basis of linguistic and cultural homogeneity as far as possible.

3. All the component parts of the Federation are to have a uniformly democratic constitution.

4. The land as well as the underground riches are the collective property of the nation.

5. Promotion of the productivity of labour through the introduction of modern mechanical means of production is the responsibility of the State.

6. Heavy industries and banks are subject to State control.

7. Cultivators are entitled to hold land, without any disability, subject to the payment of a unitary land tax. Small agricultural producers are to be free from all other taxation except local rates.

8. Promotion by the State of large scale co-operative agriculture through the supply of modern machinery and cheap credit.

9. An irreducible standard of living for all labouring in fields, factories, mines, transport, offices and schools, to be guaranteed by a minimum scale of wages.

10. Employment or relief is a right of citizenship.

11. Nobody shall labour for more than six hours a day, for six days a week, and every worker shall be entitled to one month's leave with full pay every year, and women workers to three months' maternity leave.

12. Free and compulsory secular education for all children up to the age of sixteen.

13. Promotion of public health and sanitation is a charge of the State.
14. Freedom of press, speech and association to be constitutionally guaranteed for all but the enemies of the people.
15. Fullest freedom of religion and worship.
16. Identical rights and responsibilities of citizenship for men and women.
17. Protection for the rights of minorities through proportional representation on public bodies.
18. Complete cultural autonomy.

As these principles present to the masses a concrete picture of freedom, there has been a growing response from them. Local Conventions of people's delegates have been held in a large number of places throughout the country to endorse the principles. The delegates are elected in meetings held all over the selected area to explain the Fundamental Principles.

All champions of people's freedom can participate in this activity, and before long create a powerful sanction for the demand for the establishment of a genuinely democratic State.

The procedure for organising the people's initiative for moulding the future Constitution of the country has also been formulated by the Radical Democratic Party. The delegates to local People's Conventions are elected from a more or less large group of villages or particular urban areas after a period of campaign to popularise the principles. Local People's Conventions elect delegates to District Conventions, and the latter to Provincial Conventions. Finally, delegates elected by Provincial Conventions will meet in the National People's Convention to endorse the Fundamental Principles of the Constitution of a Democratic State.

People's Committees set up by the local People's Conventions will elect delegates to the Constituent Assembly, which will meet ultimately to give legal sanction to the Constitution worked out in detail on the basis of the Fundamental Principles endorsed by the National People's Convention.

The National People's Convention will demand the establishment of a Provisional Government which will in due time convene the Constituent Assembly and supervise the formal promulgation of the Constitution and the election of the Indian Parliament under the new Constitution.

Meanwhile, the local People's Committees will function as the guardians of the people's interest in a variety of ways. Primarily, they will begin the reorganisation of the economic life of the country which is the condition for the establishment of freedom needed by the masses of the people. Consumers' and primary producers' co-operatives will be formed as the most effective instrument under the given situation for re-organising the economic life of the country. By virtue of this initiative in tackling the most fundamental social problem, together with other auxiliary activities promoting popular education and public sanitation, the People's Committees will become the rallying ground of the masses of their respective localities and give organised expression to their energy and will. Thus, they will develop into the basic units of the rising democratic State. Through their instrumentality, the people will become the custodians of effective political power.

The Radical Democratic Party appeals to all the champions of the freedom of the Indian people to take up this constructive activity to help the democratic masses come forward and take their destiny in

their own hand. That is the road of India's advance towards the goal of freedom, which will be within her reach soon after the war is over. That is the chance for her to take up her place in the world revolutionised by the war. It depends on the realistic, far-sighted and progressively minded fighters for freedom whether she will be able to avail of the chances, instead of remaining in the backwaters of world politics, embittered by racial animosity, while waiting for freedom to come as a gift from the hated foreigners.

From the very beginning, the Radical Democratic Party was of the opinion that this war was going to revolutionise the world, and that India could not remain unaffected by the process, even if she did not participate voluntarily and purposefully in this objectively revolutionary world conflict. The chances of Indian freedom have become brighter owing to the certainty of the defeat of the Axis Powers. But India may still miss her chances of freedom if she remains dominated by the older political parties and leaders, who failed to march abreast of world events in the most crucial period of history.

The Radical Democratic Party has always maintained that a realignment of forces in the public life of the country and the rationalisation of Indian politics were the conditions for the freedom of the Indian people. Political developments, sure to take place immediately after the war, will create an atmosphere favourable for the necessary realignment of forces. All progressively-minded people who conceive of freedom, not as a mere change in the complexion of the government, but as an ideal with a concrete social content, must take the initiative before it is too late. They must take the field immediately so that, by the time the war will be over

and political developments will begin to take place, the Indian masses will also be mobilised so as to assert themselves on the situation and shape the developments according to their needs and aspirations.

Pioneer in the field, the Radical Democratic Party will gladly welcome the co-operation of all who feel the spirit of time and are prepared to travel the way which is lying open before the Indian people to reach the goal of freedom. Let us join hands, and march ahead.